

RESOLUTION HONORING THE EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

**HON. CHRISTOPHER P. CARNEY**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 7, 2007*

Mr. CARNEY. Madam Speaker, our Nation must remain vigilant against all threats to the homeland, including acts of terrorism and natural disasters. Department of Homeland Security employees stand willing, ready, and able to respond should catastrophe strike. They work long hours to deter, detect, and prevent acts of terrorism against the homeland.

As protectors of our Nation's borders, airports, seaports, rail lines, and other transit systems, they are always on call. Together with other agencies and departments of the Federal Government, they work with State, local, and tribal partners to enhance preparedness at all levels of Government.

On January 24th, the Department of Homeland Security marked its fourth anniversary. The Department, which has more than 208,000 employees, plays a vital role in ensuring the Nation's security and preparing the American people for future catastrophes.

In light of this anniversary, it is fitting and appropriate for the House of Representatives to take a moment to honor the employees of the Department for their contributions in protecting the homeland and the sacrifices they make to protect the American people.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MRS. PLACIDA PEÑA BARRERA

**HON. HENRY CUELLAR**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 7, 2007*

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Placida Peña Barrera on her reaching the milestone of her 80th birthday. She is one of the most inspiring members of the community in the City of Laredo and in the State of Texas.

Mrs. Placida Peña Barrera was born on July 13, 1926, in the City of Guerra in the great State of Texas. She moved to Roma, Texas, and commuted to Rio Grande City to attend high school, where she graduated in 1945. Five years later, she met Raymundo Barrera and together they raised six children. She was committed to being the best mother for her children.

With her husband's retirement, she decided to work as a clerk for the Laredo Independent School District, while also taking classes at Texas A&M International University. Placida graduated from Texas A&M International University in 1978, at the age of 52 with a degree in teaching.

Mrs. Barrera has worked consistently to uplift the lives of children in Laredo, Texas, through her 22 years of teaching at United Independent School District. While there, she established the Laredo chapter of the NASA's Young Astronauts program. For her work, she was awarded certificates of appreciation. She and her husband were also recognized by the Department of Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin for their publication of "U.S.

Latinos and Latinas and World War Two Oral History."

After serving her community as an educator for nearly two decades, Mrs. Barrera retired in 2000, and is enjoying her time with her husband and their grandchildren. It is because of her work that the youth in the community were able to realize their potential to create a new and better future for themselves.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to have had the opportunity to recognize the dedication of Mrs. Placida Peña Barrera to her community, and ask you to join me in honoring her on her birthday. I thank you for your time.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. MARY BONO**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 7, 2007*

Mrs. BONO. Madam Speaker, yesterday, February 6, 2007, I was unable to attend suspension votes due to personal illness.

Were I present for the rollcall votes, I would have voted in the following manner for the following votes:

1. Rollcall Vote No. 76, H.R. 161, the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act of 2007—Vote: "Yea."

2. Rollcall Vote No. 77, H.R. 386, the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District Conveyance Act of 2007—Vote: "Yea."

HONORING BEST BUDDIES

**HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 7, 2007*

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I would like to call your attention to Best buddies, an organization founded the same year I was first elected to Congress, in 1989. If Best Buddies has one message, it can be articulated by its founder, Anthony K. Shriver, who lives in Miami and has stated "that every person has a gift. And that every person can contribute." This message is emblematic of what makes America successful and, in turn, has made Best Buddies a thriving international organization serving thousands of deserving individuals every year.

The main concept behind this organization is simple, yet profoundly effective. Best Buddies establishes one-on-one friendships between people with and without intellectual disabilities. This simple concept allows those who are often excluded because of their differences, the opportunity to engage socially and become integrated into society. Best Buddies' efforts in our communities are commendable and I encourage all Americans to embrace this organization, its ideals and initiatives.

Best Buddies also opens doors and provides opportunities for people with disabilities. Through the support of this organization, many are able to attain jobs allowing them to earn an income, pay taxes and work alongside others in our workforce. For students, Best Buddies' initiatives at schools and colleges are helping the intellectually disabled integrate socially with their peers. In the past, many were

often separated into special education classes making their social life somewhat isolated. To address this issue, Best Buddies has established several programs at different levels, from Best Buddies Middle Schools and a Peer Buddy system in High Schools, to Best Buddies Colleges. All three programs use the founding principles of this organization, allowing students with and without intellectual disabilities to create friendships and bonds that will last a lifetime.

The success of Best Buddies can be attributed to the indelible experiences, not only for those with intellectual disabilities, but for the many volunteers and buddies involved with this tremendous program. I am proud that the main headquarters is located in South Florida, in my Congressional district, and I look forward to supporting Best Buddies as it continues to grow and positively affect so many lives.

IN RECOGNITION OF GILBERT RIVERA

**HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 7, 2007*

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to recognize the life and contributions of a tremendous community advocate, businessman, and cherished friend, Gilbert Rivera.

In 1957, Gilbert Rivera migrated from Puerto Rico with his mother, father and twelve brothers and sisters to Bedford Stuyvesant with little money, and a dream to one day own his own business.

After graduating from Automotive High School and serving in the U.S. army, Gil started a small construction firm. But with his drive and determination, the company did not stay small for long and overtime grew to become one of the largest Hispanic owned contracting and building supply businesses in New York City. AM&G's diverse portfolio of projects includes landmarks admired by preservationists, such as Carnegie Hall, Erasmus Hall HS, and Columbia University as well as residential buildings on Fifth Avenue.

But despite his good fortune, Gil never forgot his roots. He stayed in Brooklyn, placing a premium on working to better neighborhoods and communities, and continuing to create jobs for young people.

One of the many things that made Gilbert Rivera unique was that he used his success to improve the lives of everyone he touched. He was a socially conscious, philanthropic man who was a loyal and generous supporter of the causes he believed in. He founded the Hispanic Business Group to advocate for greater business opportunities for Hispanic owned businesses with corporate America and was actively involved with numerous community organizations, including the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, Brooklyn Bridge Park, and the scholarship fund for young Latinos.

During his time with us, he walked upon this earth and used the power of his beliefs and determination to instill hope and inspiration, not only to his family but in all who knew him. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I rise with my colleagues in the House of Representatives to